

Common Lizard



Portstewart Strand



Roe Estuary

## Visitor Information

For further information on where to stay, places to visit or things to do contact:

**Northern Ireland Tourist Board**  
 59 North Street  
 Belfast  
 BT1 1NB  
 T: 028 9023 1221  
 F: 028 9024 0960  
 E: info@nitb.com  
 W: www.discovernorthernireland.com

**Causeway Coast and Antrim Glens Ltd.**  
 11 Lodge Road  
 Coleraine, Co. Londonderry  
 BT52 1LU  
 T: 028 7032 7720  
 F: 028 7032 7719  
 E: mail@causewaycoastandglens.com  
 W: www.causewaycoastandglens.com

**Coleraine Tourist Information Centre**  
 Railway Road  
 Coleraine, Co. Londonderry  
 BT52 1PE  
 T: 028 7034 4723  
 F: 028 7035 1756  
 E: colerainetic@btconnect.com  
 W: www.colerainebc.gov.uk

**Limavady Tourist Information Complex**  
 7 Connell Street  
 Limavady, Co. Londonderry  
 BT49 0HA  
 T: 028 7776 0307  
 F: 028 7772 2010  
 E: tourism@limavady.gov.uk  
 W: www.limavady.gov.uk

**Benone Tourist Centre**  
 53 Benone Avenue  
 Seacoast Road  
 Magilligan, Co. Londonderry  
 BT49 0LQ  
 T: 028 777 50555  
 F: 028 7775 0919  
 E: tourism@limavady.gov.uk  
 W: www.limavady.gov.uk



Ards Peninsula



Heath Spotted Orchid

## How to get there and how to get around!

Situated on the North West coast of Northern Ireland Binevenagh AONB is only 20 minutes drive from Londonderry. The City of Derry airport is even closer. Visitors arriving at either Belfast City Airport or Belfast International Airport can travel there in just over an hour. A ferry service connects Magilligan with Greencastle in County Donegal.

Binevenagh AONB is well connected by rail and Coleraine, Castlerock and Bellarena are on the main Northern Ireland rail network. Regular bus services operate to the AONB from both Limavady and Coleraine. Part of the Causeway Coastal Route follows the A2 around the coast whilst inland the A37 connects the main towns of Limavady and Coleraine. Cyclists can alternatively use the Sustrans National Cycle Network (Route 93) whilst walkers can enjoy the North Sperrins Way, one of Northern Ireland's Waymarked Ways, part of which is within the AONB area.

## Country Code

When visiting the Causeway Coast and Glens please observe the Country Code.

- Leave livestock, crops and machinery alone
- Guard against all risk of fire
- Fasten all gates
- Keep your dogs under strict control
- Keep to public paths across farmland
- Use gates and stiles to cross fences, hedges and walls
- Take your litter home
- Help to keep all water clean
- Protect wildlife, plants and trees
- Take special care on country roads
- Make no unnecessary noise
- Enjoy the countryside and respect its life and work
- Dune systems are fragile, please do not take bicycles or motorbikes into the dune system
- Please take care when walking along the coast especially near cliffs. Some paths are potentially dangerous particularly in stormy weather



Benone Beach



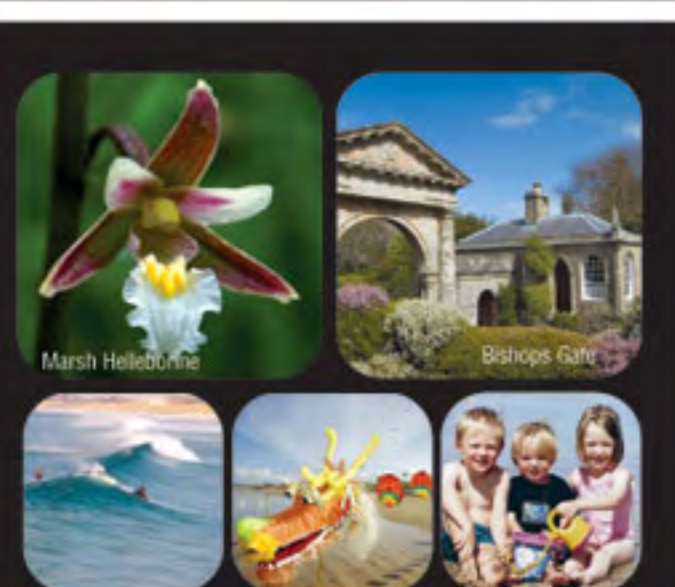
Kelp

such as the redshank and lapwing. Shelduck have been known to nest in the sandhills near Castlerock. For shell spotters the beaches of Binevenagh AONB are a paradise. Look closely and you could find anything from a delicate top shell to large oyster, whelk or Icelandic mussel shell. (Onshore you might see a small whale or dolphin whilst Common (or Harbour) porpoise often hug the shoreline in summer. Inland Binevenagh has been designated as both a Special Area of Conservation and as an Area of Special Scientific Interest. This striking basalt headland is important for both its geology and geomorphology, however it is particularly noted for its unique assemblage of arctic-alpine plants such as the purple saxifrage and moss campion. Willowers such as kidney vetch, harebell and wild thyme are common on the moss rich screes and slopes. The native ash and hazel woodland at both Aghnacloa and the Limba is a feature of the lower slopes and home to several rare plants including the bird's-nest orchid. Freveigne falcons can often be seen hunting around the cliff face.

Atkeenaigh situated on the plateau above Binevenagh is an important example of an intact upland raised bog and supports many rare bog land plants and mosses such as sphagnum imbricatum. This site has wild fox, badger, stoat, otter and notably rabbits. The dune land also provides a habitat for Ireland's only pebble, the common lizard.

The AONB provides a habitat for a wide range of other animals including upland area such as Springwell and Ballyhanna have been planted in commercial forestry.

The RAMSAR site in recognition of its international importance for birds and whooper swan on their return from Iceland each Autumn. Lough Foyle has extensive mussel and oyster beds and houndie, plaice and shoals of grey mullet are common. The River Roe, River Foyle and River Bann are all noted for salmon and sea trout. The Bann Estuary is also noted for eels and the mudflats here are important for many waders.



For more information on the Binevenagh Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty contact:

**CAUSEWAY COAST & GLENS HERITAGE TRUST**  
 Tilly Molloy's  
 19 Main St  
 Arroy, Ballymoney  
 Co. Antrim, BT53 8RQ  
 Tel: 028 2075 2100  
 Fax: 028 2075 2101  
 email: info@ccgtht.org  
 or visit our website [www.ccgtht.org](http://www.ccgtht.org)

**Environment & Heritage Service**  
[www.ehstai.gov.uk](http://www.ehstai.gov.uk)

Commonwealth House  
 35 Castle Street  
 Belfast  
 BT1 1GU  
 Tel: 028 9025 1477  
 Fax: 028 9025 6594  
 email: ehstai@doeni.gov.uk  
 or visit our website [www.ehstai.gov.uk](http://www.ehstai.gov.uk)

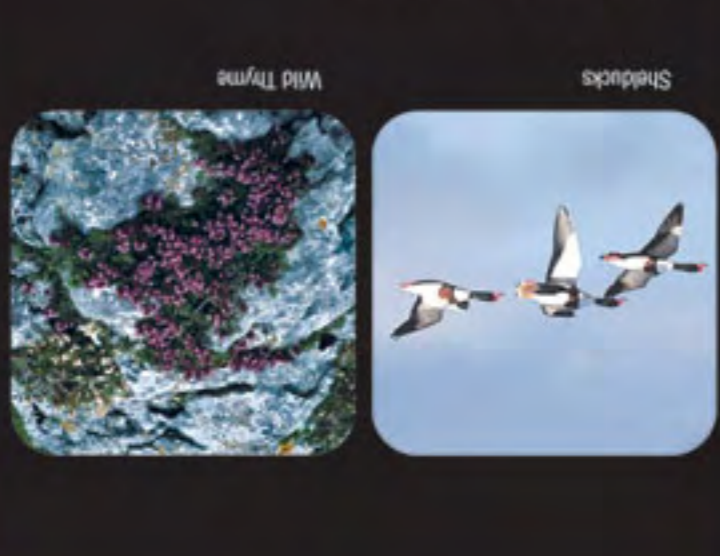


This project has been assisted by Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust as part of the Natural Resources Rural Tourism Initiative under the EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation

Photo credit: RTB, Mike Hartwell, COAG, David Kaye (rgb-images.com), John White, Robert Thompson, Coleraine Borough Council, Art Ward, EHS, Gareth M., Jim Allen

Much of the landscape of Binevenagh AONB is characterised by long beaches and extensive dune systems. Within these dune systems there are examples of creeping willow, embryonic and shifting dunes whilst the damp areas in between the dunes are known as 'dune slacks'. The post glacial landscape at Magilligan Strand, a National Nature Reserve, was created as a result of the changing sea levels which followed glaciation and shares many of the characteristics of the 'machair' landscapes of western Scotland. The Bann Estuary is also an important site in relation to the study of coastal physiography. Both have been designated as Special Areas of Conservation and as Areas of Special Scientific Interest. Managing the dune system at Binevenagh, a Local Nature Reserve, is the responsibility of Limavady Borough Council whilst Portstewart sand dunes are managed by the National Trust.

These are special habitats and important for the wide range of different plants and invertebrate species they support including for example sea buckthorn have helped to bind the dunes together but in the case of brown, greying and marsh fringing. In some cases marram grass and dune bunting, coloured burnet moth and butterflies such as the meadow heath, there are many different insects here as well including the shepherd's cross, pebbwort, variegated horsebell and the rare marsh hawk. The AONB has a colourful cultural and an outstanding built and archaeological heritage which includes many listed buildings and scheduled monuments. Visitors have the opportunity to take part in a wide range of recreational activity including walking, cycling, swimming, orienteering, angling and gliding. This, together with the easy access by road, rail, air and sea, has helped to establish Binevenagh AONB as one of Northern Ireland's most popular visitor destinations.



### Natural heritage

### Built Heritage

Hezlett House, just outside Castlerock, was built in 1690 and is a rare Irish example of 'cruck' construction. Originally a rectory, the house has no foundations but was built around a frame of curved timbers or 'crucks'. Hezlett House is now owned by the National Trust and open to the public. Nearby, Castlerock has an interesting history linked to the development of the Londonderry and Coleraine Railway Company who offered 10 years first class travel free to anyone willing to build a villa in the town. These 'villa tickets' proved popular and many of the older buildings such as 'Seavell House', 'Craiglea' or 'Atlantic Lodge' date from this period. Other interesting buildings include 'Rock Ryan' originally built as a bathing lodge, the 'Twelve Apostles' a distinctive basalt terrace and Christ Church, Church of Ireland which dates from 1870 and was designed by Fredrick William Porter. Castlerock railway station dates from 1873-75 and was designed by Charles Lanyon.

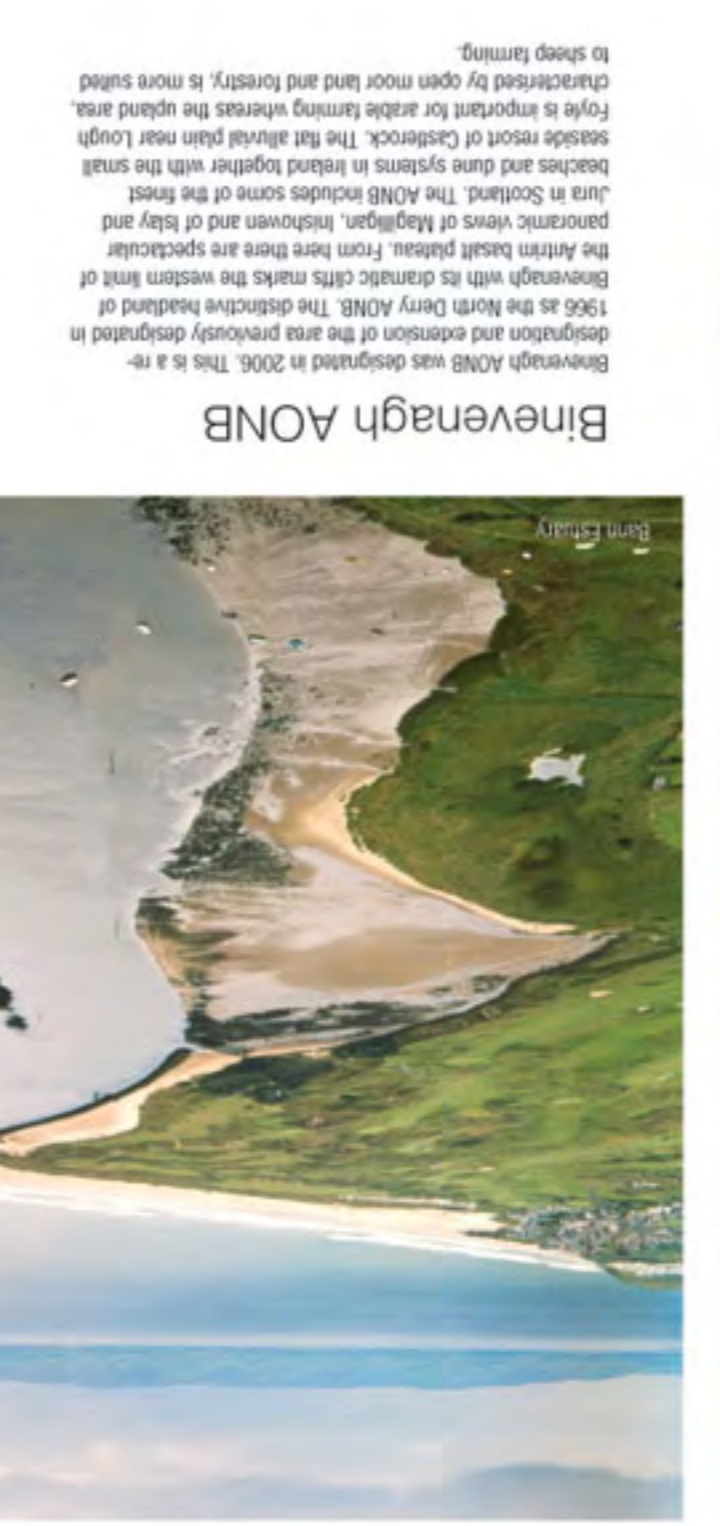
At Downhill Estate there is a series of interesting buildings associated with Sir Hervey Bruce, Bishop of Derry. The construction of Downhill Palace dates back to 1785 and at one time included a library and gallery with works by Raphael and Caravaggio. Unfortunately it was destroyed by fire in 1845 and only a romantic ruin remains. Bishop Hervey also built the beautiful Mussenden Temple, as a summer library for his young cousin Frideswide Mussenden. Occupying a precarious cliff top site, the Mussenden Temple was modelled on the Temple of Vesta at Tivoli in Italy and an inscription inside reads 'Tis pleasant safely to behold from shore the rolling ship and hear the tempest roar'. From here there are superb views of both Downhill and Donegal. Other interesting buildings built by Bishop Hervey during this period include both the Bishops and the Lions Gates. All of these buildings are owned by the National Trust and access is available to the public. Bishop Hervey also commissioned a number of famine relief projects including the Bishops road which today provides a spectacular scenic route.



### Built Heritage

Further west the Martello tower at Magilligan is a well known landmark. Built between 1812 and 1817 to guard against a possible French invasion it was one of 74 constructed in Ireland. In its day the Martello Tower would have included a cannon platform and quarters for 12 men and an officer. Evidence of more recent coastal defence works include a series of World War Two 'pill boxes' examples of which can be seen at both Castlerock and Portstewart Strands together with a radar and anti aircraft station at Magilligan.

Bellarena House, for many years the seat of the Gage family was designed by the famous architect Charles Lanyon. So was Drenagh House famous for its 70 acre Italian and English gardens, its conifer arboretum and rhododendron glen. Fruithill, commissioned by Robert McCausland was the first house built on the Drenagh estate and dates from the 18th century. All three houses are still in use as private residences.



### Cultural Heritage

Binevenagh translates in Irish as the 'mountain of Fiobhne' in legend the son of an ancient celtic chief. Binevenagh AONB has been settled since Mesolithic times and the area around both the Bann and the Foyle estuaries has a rich archaeological heritage. Several sites have been excavated near Portstewart Strand and Castlerock to reveal flints, scrapers and pottery. Further up the Bann at Grangemore there were several other important finds including a dug out canoe, one of five found on the lower stretch of the river, pottery, beads and bronze age pins. Other prehistoric sites include Ballywildrick standing stone and Bronze Age cairns on Binevenagh and at Ballyhanna. Excavations of several middens has revealed evidence of occupation from the Iron Age to the Middle Ages and one shell midden at Ballymuholland near Lough Foyle revealed the remains of cattle, sheep, pig, red deer and whale as well as fish bones and shells. There is also evidence for early iron working and another midden produced pottery, lignite bracelets and part of a bone comb. The most spectacular find was made in 1896 close to the River Roe and became known as the 'Brighter hoard'. This produced several gold objects including a large golden torc, two necklaces, a bowl and a model boat complete with oars.

The 'Glent's Sconce' near Sconce Hill was originally an iron age hilltop enclosure similar to Granian in Donegal and reputedly associated with 'Cethern son of Fintona' one of the Fied Branch Knights. Craigholm Fort is a similar enclosure close to Binevenagh. Other prominent earthworks include Stradsraigh, a fine early Christian period rath, and a fortified hilltop at Downhill.



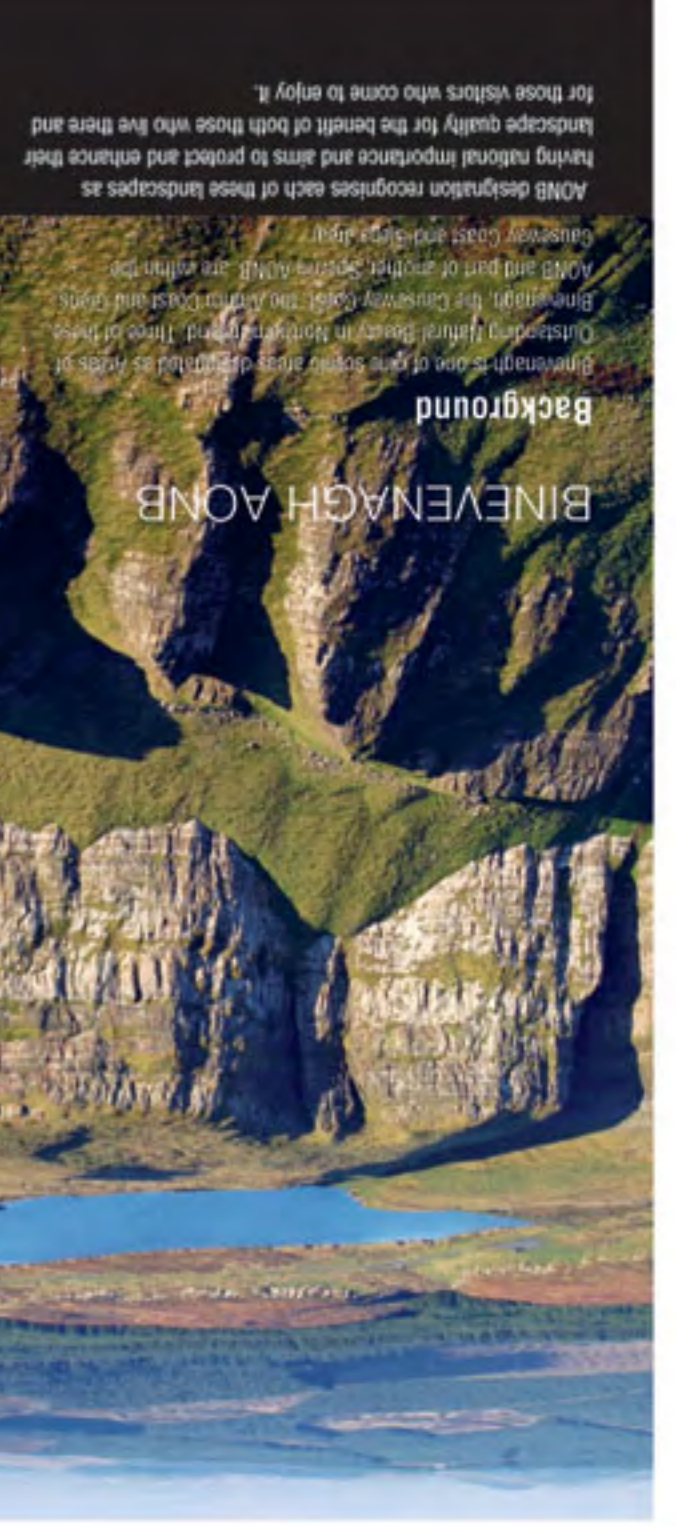
### Cultural Heritage

The land around Magilligan close to Drumavally and Oughtymoyle is important for arable farming particularly carrots which grow well in the sandy soil. The place name Magilligan translates from Irish as the parish of the clan Gilligan. This area, known locally as the 'lovels', was where Lt Col Thomas Colby undertook the Lough Foyle Baseline survey in 1826. This helped to create the most accurate map of Ireland at that time and two of the original base towers used for the survey still survive at Ballymuholland and Mineary. Bellarena is also home to one of only two gliding clubs in Ireland offering visitors the chance to view the AONB from the air. Today much of the land at Magilligan is in use as either a military exercise area and firing range with only restricted access for the public.

Around the foothills of Binevenagh there are also several important churches including St Aidans, Aghanloo, Dunboe and Tamaghtard. The remains of an older church at Tamaghtard, close to St Aidans, date from the 13th century. St Aidans is reputedly the final resting place for St Aidan whose remains were returned here from Lindisfame but also has associations with St Patrick. A holy well within the grounds is said to have healing powers and several mass rocks in the woods near by possibly date from 1695 the time of the Penal Laws. The churchyard is also famous as the burial place of Denis O Hampsey one of Ireland's most famous harpers. Blind from the age of three, he lived to the incredible age of 112 and was one of ten who performed at the famous Belfast Harp Festival in 1792.

In the past travelling inland from Coleraine to Limavady could be hazardous! The inland route (B201) known locally as the 'Murder Hole' road was reputedly home to as many as six gangs of highway men the most notorious of which was led by the infamous 'Cushty Glen'. Today visitors can choose to follow the coast along the Causeway Coastal Route or alternatively take the train. This part of the railway journey between Coleraine and Derry featured in Michael Palin's Television series 'Great Railway Journeys of the World' and is nothing short of spectacular. Its route follows the coast and includes Downhill tunnel, one of the longest in Ireland. When the tunnel was blasted in 1846 it attracted crowds of over 12,000 people and afterwards over 500 people celebrated its completion at a huge banquet held within the tunnel itself. This event became known as the 'Great Blast'.

There have been many shipwrecks along this exposed northern coastline. The Bar Mouth at the entrance to the Bann has always been particularly hazardous and here there are records of over 25 shipwrecks, the most recent of which was a Panamanian registered vessel, the Burgundia, in 1981.



### Binevenagh AONB



Introductory leaflet

### Binevenagh AONB

AONB designation recognises each of these landscapes as having national importance and aims to protect and enhance their landscape quality for the benefit of both those who live there and for those visitors who come to enjoy it.

Binevenagh is one of nine scenic areas designated as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in Northern Ireland. Three of these AONB and part of another, Sperrin AONB, are within the Causeway Coast and Glens AONB.

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Binevenagh AONB was designated in 2006. This is a re-designation and extension of the area previously designated in 1966 as the North Berrry AONB. The distinctive headland of Binevenagh with its dramatic cliffs marks the western limit of the Ardrin basalt plateau. From here there are spectacular panoramic views of Magilligan, Lisbown and of Bally and Jura in Scotland. The AONB includes some of the finest beaches and dune systems in Ireland together with the small seaside resort of Castlerock. The flat alluvial plain near Lough Foyle is important for arable farming whereas the upland area, characterised by open moor land and forestry, is more suited to sheep farming.

